THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) It has been the constant endeavour of the Government to promote exports including those of commercial vehicles and passenger cars. The value of the above exports during the last three years are furnished below:

(Rs. Crores)

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92 (upto Dec. 91)
Commercial Vehicles	124·04	161·74	112·06
Passenger cars	17·04	22·80	107·35

SOURCE: Engineering Export Promotion Council.

Regular Operation of Auction Platforms of Tombacco

114. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that auction platforms of tobacco are not operating regularly in Andhra Pradesh due to growers' agitation;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to redress the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There has been since 13-4-1992 some resentment among the growers on account of fall in prices of tobacco as compared to the last year. At 15 out of 23 platforms auctions have remained suspended.

(c) Taking note of the resentment of the tobacco growers, the Governmeet advised the Tobacco Board to immediately hold an emergency meeting of the Board to take stock of the situation and to take remedial steps. The Chairman of the Tobacco Board has impressed upon the traders including the exporters and the manufacturers of cigarettes the need for offering remunerative prices to the farmers in the overall interest of the industry. Major buyers including the Russians have also been approached to step up their purchases.

Export of Tobacco to the Erstwhile USSR

115. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the protocol/agreement for the export of tobacco to erstwhile USSR and when it was signed;

(b) what is the amount for which individual orders were signed; and

(c) what are the reasons for the gap between the above two?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) (a) to (c) Protocol between the Government of India and the Government of the Russian Federation on the trade turnover and payment in 1992 was signed on 22nd February, 1992. It envisaged export of 25,000 tonnes of tobacco and 3 billion pieces of cigarettes to Russia. The Russian buyers have contracted for 15,000 tonnes of tobacco and 3 billion pieces of cigarettes so far. The

Russians can contract for the remaining quantity of 10,000 Mts. of tobacco within the calender year 1992 in terms of the protocol.

Speed Post Facility

116. SHRI BHADRESWAR GOHAIN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have given their permission to carry mails by night superfast buses;

(b) whehter Government propose to introduce speed post facilities to more areas in Assam; and

(c) if so, what are the names of the places to be covered by speed post facilities?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Introducton of Speed Post Service to new areas is an on going process. As and when a proposal is received, the same is examined keeping in view commercial and market viability.

Cartel of suppliers of Silver Plated Contacts of Telecom Factory in Calcutta

117. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the suppliers of Silver plated contacts to telecom factory, Calcutta have formed a group in response to the factory's tender and offered a simple price for the material;

(b) whether the sanctity of the tender has been defeated;

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to discourage cartel amongst the suppliers; and

(d) what are the facts and details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) No Sir, there was no cartel formation in this case as the price bids of the tenderers were not all identical.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) As and when cartel formation is noticed, the entire process of tendering is done afresh.

(d) Does not arise.

Post Offices and Telephone facility to the Villages

118. SHRI SHANTI TYAGI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1904 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 10th March, 1992 and state:

(a) what is the number of villages that were without a post office at the end of the financial year 1991-92;

(b) what is the number of villages having telephone facility in the country; and

(c) what are the plans of Government to cover rural India by the network of telecommunication during the Eighth Five Year Plan period?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) As per the latest information available, there are 478250 villages without post offices in the country.

(b) As on 31-3-92, there were 75257 villages having telephone facility in the country.

(c) During the Eighth Five Year Plan period, the Government propose to :—

(1) to provide telephone facility to all Gram Panchayats and an additional 1.5 lakhs other villages dur-